

# THE VICTIMS' VOICE

Spring 2018 Newsletter



## NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS RIGHTS WEEK

The Office of The Victim Advocate hosted a symposium during NCVRW on Friday, April 13th.

The theme, Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims, emphasized the importance of inclusion in victim

services. The conference provided attendees an in-depth overview of crime victims rights and the importance of honoring and respecting those rights throughout the criminal process.

The OVA was honored to have representatives from The CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence, State of CT Office of Victim Services, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Survivors of Homicide and The Victims Rights Center of CT host breakout sessions. Attendees represented CT Law Enforcement, Attorneys, Victim Advocates, Service Providers and members of our community dedicated to providing services to victims of crime.

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## #SAAM: Embrace Your Voice

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, also known as SAAM. People across the United States raise awareness about sexual violence, how to prevent it, and how to support those who are affected by it. The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence and its member programs partnered with community members to host a variety of special events.

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Call the OVA Toll free: 1-88-771-3126 or Visit us online: [www.ct.gov/ova](http://www.ct.gov/ova)

## #SAAM: Embrace Your Voice

One of the many events held across the state was The Alliance Advocacy Day on Wednesday, April 4th. State Victim Advocate, Natasha M. Pierre was present and shared some words at the Legislative Office Building with local lawmakers highlighting recent legislation concerning the elimination of the statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes.

For more information about the important work and services available for victims of sexual violence visit: [Www.endsexualviolencect.org](http://Www.endsexualviolencect.org).



### **The Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Foundation 2nd Annual Victims' Rights Symposium**

The Melanie Ilene Rieger Foundation co-hosted its 2nd annual symposium during National Crime Victims' Rights Week on April 12th at Eastern CT State University. With the assistance of the foundations planning committee, University Social Work Interns and ECSU Staff the event kicked off with an informational fair where local and state agencies shared information regarding services. Featured speakers from state and local victim centered providers were also present to answer questions and address concerns regarding victim issues in our state.

Representatives from the Office of The Victim Advocate, State's Attorney Office, CT Department of Correction, Survivors of Homicide, CT Coalition against Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut, United Services Domestic Violence Program, ECSU Police, and the Sexual Assault & Interpersonal Violence Response Team (SAIV-RT) were part of this special event.

The MIR Foundation was founded in memory of Melanie who was a victim of Domestic Violence and tragically lost her life in 1994. Her parents, Mr. & Mrs. Samuel and Wanda Rieger have worked hard keeping Melanie's memory by hosting victim focused events in our state for over twenty years.

For more information regarding upcoming events and this foundation please visit <http://melanieriegerconference.com>.



## “Everyone in the system should attend”



## “Very informative conference”



## “Amazing across the board - looking forward to next year”



## UConn Law



State Victim Advocate, Natasha M. Pierre was the special guest speaker for the UConn Women's Law Students' Association annual Spring Luncheon on April 12th. WLSA Secretary, and event coordinator Onya Brown stated "This year, WLSA's main focus for our annual spring luncheon was to have a speaker who could give our women law students an action plan for how to be better, stronger, fiercer advocates;

Attorney Pierre did just that. From explaining to us her personal life journey to giving advice on how to handle being a woman in a male-dominated field, Attorney Pierre inspired our students, and helped our organization have an incredibly memorable spring luncheon. With Natasha's experience in women issues and advocacy work, she was able to connect with the law students and discuss current obstacles and concerns in an open forum. "



## WORD SEARCH

FAIRNESS      RESTITUTION

RESPECT      ADVOCATE

JUSTICE      ARREST

LAW      ATTEND

OBJECT      COURT

V	O	N	L	S	A	W	R	I	E
A	N	F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S
D	L	H	W	Y	F	R	S	C	T
V	Y	E	R	S	U	C	T	L	S
O	C	G	J	U	S	T	I	C	E
C	O	F	D	N	E	T	T	A	R
A	U	D	U	E	G	S	U	W	R
T	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	L	A
E	T	S	A	G	H	J	I	A	V
C	R	A	B	N	K	C	O	U	R
A	O	B	J	E	C	T	N	O	T

## TRAINING



The Office of the Victim Advocate can offer a series of educational training sessions geared toward raising general awareness about the operations of our office and the specific rights and services available to victims of crime in

our state. If your group or organization is interested in learning more about the trainings available, please contact the Office of the Victim Advocate at (860) 550-6632 or email [ova.info@ct.gov](mailto:ova.info@ct.gov)



## OVA Staff Assist Victim of Credit Card Fraud

By Hakima Bey-Coon  
Staff Attorney

A victim of Identity Theft was referred to the Office of the Victim Advocate for assistance. Apparently the adult son of the victim opened up credit card accounts in his mother's name without her knowledge. Once the theft was discovered, the victim immediately contacted the police. A criminal investigation ensued. Thereafter, an arrest warrant was issued and her adult son was arrested for Identity Theft and Larceny. All of the victim's credit card accounts had been forgiven except one from a nationally known bank. The bank's fraud unit determined that the matter did not constitute fraud because the credit card charges included food and household items, and the bills were sent to the victim's address for nine months. Ultimately, the victim's adult son pleaded guilty to First Degree Identity Theft and Third Degree Larceny. He was sentenced to a total effective sentence of 5 years jail, execution suspended after serving 1 year, followed by 3 years of probation. Additionally, recognizing that the bank was also a victim of the Defendant's fraudulent acts, the court imposed a written order of restitution on behalf of the bank to ensure that the bank could re-

coup its financial loss directly from the defendant as opposed to the innocent victim.

It should be noted that the bank did not have any participation in the criminal proceedings. Even though the defendant pled guilty and was sentenced, and the bank was granted a written order of restitution, the bank still held the victim responsible for the charges.

As a result, the OVA began communication with the bank with no success. Shortly thereafter, the bank transferred the matter to a collection agency for further action since the victim had not made any payments toward the fraudulent charges. The OVA continued its advocacy for the victim with the collection agency. The OVA reiterated to the collection agency that a written order of restitution had been imposed on the bank's behalf and that the restitution order is enforceable as a judgment in a civil action.

One week after the OVA's communication with the collection agency the victim received correspondence from the bank notifying her that it researched her claim, credited her account for the fraudulent charges and credited her account for any interest



charges! Needless to say the victim is very pleased that the dispute has been resolved and she has been made whole. Moreover, the bank can pursue its order of restitution against the defendant as a judgment in the civil court.

Although the victim in this matter had a favorable outcome, the OVA strongly suggests that victims encourage their banking institution to actively participate in the criminal proceedings so that the bank's rights as a secondary victim can be heard and incorporated in the proceedings rather than solely at the time of disposition.

If you have been a victim of Identity Theft, contact the OVA or the Federal Trade Commission for more information. by visiting [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).

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## Hartford Public High School Capstone Project on the Criminal Justice System in Hartford

Student, Adalberto Millan, photographed below with State Victim Advocate, Natasha M. Pierre shares his Capstone Project

This Capstone project at Hartford Public High School provide for authentic learning experiences focused on the unique interests of high school seniors. Adalberto chose to focus on the criminal justice system in Hartford, and interviewed individuals who work or have been engaged in the criminal justice system. During his interview with Natasha, he learned about her life growing up and attending public schools in Hartford, work experience, education, the OVA, and the importance of advocates. He asked, "What is one thing the public should know about your role in the Criminal Justice System?"

Natasha replied, "The public should know that advocates are there to help crime victims' pursue their rights, which include, making statements about how they feel regarding a plea agreement or sentence, to be heard, and the right to get information about their case."

After the interview, Adalberto created artwork depicting the Office of the Victim Advocate as a superhero assisting victims in the criminal justice process. (Pictured above to the left)

Victim Advocate, Natasha M. Pierre was impressed with Adalberto's work and felt honored to be a part of this special project.

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